

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SHOTOVER

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name: SHOTOVER

County: Oxfordshire

District: South Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Forest Hill with Shotover

County: Oxfordshire

District: South Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Holton

County: Oxfordshire

District: South Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Wheatley

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.756565
Longitude: -1.1565473
National Grid Reference: SP 58315 06767
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1001106
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

An early C18 country house surrounded by a contemporary formal garden, set within an C18/C19 landscape park. Two garden buildings were designed in the early 1730s by William Kent.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Shotover was part of the Royal Forest of Shotover during the Middle Ages, the rangership of which was given to Timothy Tyrrell in 1613. Tyrrell built a house with associated buildings and walled garden later in the C17, before Shotover was disafforested in 1666, when the family obtained a large part of the c 450ha forest. James Tyrrell (1643-1718), an Oxford Scholar and historian, inherited the estate in 1701, building a new house with formal gardens 1714-18 near to the old house, siting the house on an axis with fishponds remodelled as the Long Canal. His son, General James Tyrrell, continued the development of the gardens, employing William Kent c 1730 to design two buildings for the west gardens within a wilderness setting. Tyrrell's wilderness walks surrounding Kent's buildings may have been inspired by the 1720s Bridgeman layout at Rousham (qv), the home of Tyrrell's friend Colonel Dormer. Kent may have advised on the layout of the west gardens, but no evidence of this has yet (1998) been found, and in any case he had not entered the field of landscape gardening by the early 1730s. Tyrrell died in 1742,

the estate being left to the family of his friend, the Hanoverian Ambassador Augustus Schutz, in whose hands it remained, largely unaltered, until 1850. George Maitland next bought the property, adding the two wings to the house in place of the earlier flanking arcade. Lt Colonel James Miller bought the estate in 1871, and it has remained in private ownership since.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Shotover lies 6km east of the centre of Oxford, on the north-west edge of the village of Wheatley. The c 80ha site is bounded to the south by agricultural land and beyond this by the old London Road, now known as the Wheatley Road, running over Shotover Hill to Oxford, marked by a line of mature larches. To the north it is bounded by the A40 London to Oxford dual carriageway (turnpiked early C18, superseding the old London Road), bounded by a belt of trees, with a low stone wall south-east of the Oxford Lodge. The west boundary merges with farmland, the east adjoins Wheatley. Shotover lies on the east side of Shotover Hill, on gently undulating land, set amongst agricultural land.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance, at the head of the north drive off the A40, lies 400m north-west of the house. It is marked by the Oxford Gate (C18, remodelled C19, listed grade II), with two rusticated limestone piers topped by ball finials linked by cast-iron gates and railings to two secondary piers, in similar style, with ball finials. Further railings sweep outwards to the lower outer piers without finials. The Oxford Lodge (mid/late C19, listed grade II) lies close by on the east side of the drive, of one storey with an attic, built of limestone ashlar in Classical style. The drive curves south through the park, entering the pleasure grounds 75m north-west of the house through a gateway in iron park fencing, arriving at a rectangular carriage sweep by the porch on the west, entrance front.

The south entrance lies 1.2km south-west of the house, flanked by two ashlar gate piers and wooden gates set into a stone wall. A single-storey stone lodge with several gables and a prominent brick chimney lies close by to the east. The south drive runs north-east straight through the park, flanked by an avenue of trees, until it reaches the south boundary of the pleasure grounds, 300m south-west of the house, when it turns east, following the boundary, and then north, past the stable yard. It continues north through trees, rising up to arrive at the west front. The earlier drive, now grassed over, lies to the west, adjacent to and above the current drive as it rises up to the house from the stables, embanked to create a level approach from the boundary of the pleasure grounds, a row of mature lime trees lining the east side. It is crossed 100m south of the house by wrought-iron gates, pillars, elaborate overthrow and a screen set on a low stone wall (all early C18, listed grade II), in Baroque style.

The east drive enters 650m east of the house, behind the Gothic Temple. Prior to the mid C20 development of the dual carriageway the entrance was marked by a lodge and gateway; it is now set back off the road, flanked by mid C20 stone gate piers set within a stone wall. The drive runs west through the park, lined intermittently with mature trees, overlooking the Long Canal to the north and the park to the south, and with views beyond this over Littleworth and Wheatley to a low hillside to the south. The east drive runs alongside the south wall of the walled garden, joining the south drive close to the stable yard. A mid to late C20 drive constructed in the park runs south-east parallel with the A40, connecting the east entrance and drive with the south slip road off the Wheatley junction.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Shotover Park house (1715-20, almost certainly William Townesend, listed grade I) lies at the centre of the park, being a tall, narrow house built of colour-washed ashlar on sloping ground, and so of three storeys on the west, entrance front and four on the garden side. The east-facing garden front overlooks, and is aligned with the Long Canal and fishpond. The ground floor consists of an open loggia, which, when built, extended as an arcade of four arches on either side of the house, and was filled in c 1855 with two-storey additions, in the same style as the house, built over the arcade. This arcade, with shell-headed niches, bears a strong resemblance to William Townesend's cloister in the Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Fellows' building of 1706-12 (qv). The entrance front has a central, Ionic porch, also probably 1855, enclosing steps down to the carriage sweep, overlooking the west lawn and the Octagonal Temple, and also the Obelisk which lies 200m west in line with the entrance, but is somewhat obscured by a weeping beech.

The square stable court (late C18/early C19, listed grade II) lies 200m south of the house. An earlier, rectangular stable building (late C17/early C18, listed grade II) stands 100m south-east of the house, which, although it appears to have been designed as stables, is also reputed to be the mid C17 Ranger's Lodge.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal east garden, of linear design and forming part of a 1.2km long axis on which the house stands, was constructed by James Tyrrell c 1715-20, at the same time that the house was erected. A straight terrace with a central gravel path lies adjacent to the east front, with stone steps, probably of early C18 date, and C19 ornaments (all listed grade II), leading down to the east lawn. The lawn is laid out with a central circular pond and fountain, surrounded by a gravel path and flanked by raised grass terraces to north and south. Beyond the east lawn lies the 100m long Fish Pond, separated by a narrow earth dam from the 300m long Long Canal (formed from earlier fishponds). The vista, flanked by narrow lawns and mature ornamental and native trees, is terminated by the large, stone-built Gothic Temple (c 1720s, possibly William Townesend, listed grade II*) standing 600m east of the house, framed on three sides by tall trees (including yews and deciduous species), with a lawn in front of the west facade. The Temple has a battlemented gable with a central pinnacle and rose window, beneath which is an open loggia with three pointed arches. It is said to have been built as a piece of Oxford collegiate Gothic (Gothic Survival) rather than as part of the Gothic Revival (Batey 1982), resembling as it does the facade of the Codrington Library of All Souls' College (Townesend c 1716).

The west garden and pleasure grounds west and south-west of the house were planned in the 1730s by General Tyrrell, who employed William Kent (1685-1748) c 1730 to provide designs for two garden buildings. Although the great east/west axis also dominates this side of the house, there are various cross walks and vistas, including a major one north from the Octagonal Temple and another across the west front of the house, on line with the old course of the south drive. The level west lawn lies adjacent to the west front, with a central gravel path leading 200m west to the stone Obelisk (William Kent c 1730, listed grade II*), mounted on a pedestal at the top of a slope to the west. The Obelisk is said to mark the spot where Queen Elizabeth I, after visiting Oxford, bade farewell to the Masters who had accompanied her thus far (Jones, 1978). Beyond, a broad, tree-lined ride leads down to the partly embanked Octagon Pond, which lies surrounded by a grass path and the remains of a circle of lime trees. The lawn and Obelisk are enclosed by an iron fence from the less formal, wooded pleasure grounds to the west and south which, in the mid C18 (print, c 1750, reproduced in CL 1926), were cut through with serpentine walks. South of the Obelisk stands the stone, domed Octagonal Temple (William Kent c 1730, listed grade II*), standing 250m south-west of the house on a tall mound thrown up on high ground. The Temple has four open archways facing three straight, wooded rides terminated by the Octagon Pond (north-west), the Obelisk (north), and the old south drive, viewed along a narrow lime avenue (east), and a vista north-east to the house. The Octagon Pond is fed by a chain of informal fishponds flowing from south to north along the western boundary, these being set in open lawns with ornamental planting and backed to the west by an early C20 plantation known as The Spinney. Davis (1797) shows the fishponds as two formal circles and a rectangle, linked by a stream both to each other and to the Octagon Pond.

PARK The park surrounds the house and pleasure grounds. It remains largely pasture, with many single trees and groups in the north park. An octagonal, stone dovecote (early/mid C19, listed grade II) with a conical roof stands north-east of the Octagon Pond, 400m west of the house, and close to an C18 stone house known as The Grove (listed grade II). Home Farm (mid-late C19, listed grade II), a complete example of a model farm, lies 500m south of the house, with an ornamental north-east front overlooking the park.

Davis' map (1797) shows the south-west part of the park separated from the pleasure grounds by a serpentine boundary. At this time the park was less extensive, having been extended to the north and south by the late C19 and again to the south in the early C20.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick- and stone-walled, rectangular kitchen garden (C18, listed grade II) lies 100m south-east of the house, enclosing c 2ha of ground, with a small range of glasshouses along part of the north wall. At the south-east corner stands the gardener's cottage (C18, listed grade II), built of limestone rubble with a rustic porch. The productive area now (1997) covers a relatively small area at the west end, and the remainder is largely laid to mown grass. The old stable block (the putative early Ranger's Lodge) is set into the south-west wall.

REFERENCES

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Maps R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 A Bryant, *Map of the County of Oxford ...*, surveyed 1823 A T
Jones (CPRE), *Shotover House Park*, 1978 (copy on EH file)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881-2 2nd edition published 1901 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st
edition published 1880

Description written: October 1997 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of
Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.